

SENATE BILL 2507

By Gresham

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 7; Title 49, Chapter 8 and Title 49, Chapter 9, relative to tuition and fees at public institutions of higher education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 7, is amended by adding SECTIONS 2 through 9 as a new part.

SECTION 2. As used in this part, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) "Continuous enrollment" means a student is enrolled at least two (2) semesters during the twelve (12) months following enrollment as an entering freshman and two (2) semesters each subsequent twelve (12) months thereafter;

(2) "Entering freshman" means a student entering a postsecondary institution who has not attempted any semester hours at any postsecondary institution after graduating from high school, completing high school in a home school program, or obtaining a GED® or HiSET®;

(3) "Public institution of higher education" or "institution" means any four-year or two-year institution operated by the board of regents or the University of Tennessee system. "Public institution of higher education" does not include a Tennessee college of applied technology;

(4) "Tuition" includes tuition, maintenance fees, course fees, program service fees, student activity fees, registration or matriculation fees, and any other fee that an undergraduate student must pay to attend the public institution of higher education. "Tuition" does not include late registration fees, returned check fees, parking fines,

library fines, or any other fee that a student can avoid accruing or the costs of books and supplies, dormitory or other housing, and meal plans or other board;

(5) "Undergraduate tuition-freeze program" or "tuition-freeze program" means a program established by a public institution of higher education under this part; and

(6) "Undergraduate year of study" means the period of time that begins with a fall semester, if the student enrolled as an entering freshman in a fall semester; spring semester, if the student enrolled as an entering freshman in a spring semester; or summer semester, if the student enrolled as an entering freshman in a summer semester; and concludes at the beginning of the next fall, spring, or summer semester respectively.

SECTION 3.

(a) Each public institution of higher education shall establish an undergraduate tuition-freeze program. The tuition-freeze program shall consist of two (2) parts:

(1) A tuition-freeze for the first two (2) years of undergraduate study; and

(2) Another tuition-freeze beginning with the third year of undergraduate study, if the student maintains eligibility for the tuition-freeze program.

(b) The tuition-freeze for the first two (2) years of undergraduate study shall freeze tuition at the rate charged when the student is an entering freshman. No increase shall be made in the amount of tuition to be paid by the student in the student's second year of undergraduate study.

(c) The tuition-freeze beginning in the third year of undergraduate study shall freeze tuition at the rate in effect for the academic year when the student begins the student's third year of undergraduate study. No increase shall be made in the amount of tuition to be paid by the student in the student's fourth, and if permitted, under Section 6, fifth year, of undergraduate study over the amount charged to the student in the student's third year of undergraduate study.

SECTION 4. To apply to an institution for the tuition-freeze program as an entering freshman, a student shall:

- (1) Be admitted to and enroll in a public institution of higher education;
- (2) Qualify for in-state classification under the rules of the board of regents or the University of Tennessee system, as applicable, to the institution attended;
- (3) Meet with an advisor and file with the student's intended major department a plan of study showing the courses that the student shall enroll in during the student's first two (2) undergraduate years of study. If possible, the plan of study shall show the courses that the student shall enroll in each semester. This plan of study shall include as many of the student's general education requirements as possible; and
- (4) Enroll in classes totaling at least fifteen (15) semester hours of credit from those specified in the student's plan of study filed with the student's intended major department.

SECTION 5. To continue to be eligible for the tuition-freeze program in the second year of undergraduate study, a student shall:

- (1) Maintain continuous enrollment at the institution in which the student enrolled as an entering freshman;
- (2) Enroll each semester of the second year of undergraduate study in classes totaling at least fifteen (15) semester hours of credit from those specified in the student's plan of study filed with the student's intended major department; and
- (3) Maintain satisfactory progress towards graduation as defined by the Tennessee higher education commission. THEC shall specify the benchmarks the student shall meet to be considered as maintaining satisfactory progress toward graduation.

SECTION 6.

- (a) A student who has successfully maintained eligibility for the tuition-freeze program through the student's second year of undergraduate study may apply to the

institution for the tuition-freeze program for the student's third undergraduate year. To apply for the tuition-freeze program for the third year of undergraduate study, the student shall:

(1) Continue to qualify for in-state classification under the rules of the board of regents or the University of Tennessee system, as applicable, to the institution attended;

(2)

(A) Meet with an advisor from the student's major department and file with the major department a plan of study showing the courses that the student shall enroll in during the student's third and fourth years of undergraduate study, if the student is enrolled in an undergraduate degree program that requires one hundred twenty (120) semester hours for graduation; or

(B) Meet with an advisor from the student's major department and file with the major department a plan of study showing the courses that the student shall enroll in during the student's third, fourth, and fifth years of undergraduate study, if the student is enrolled in an undergraduate degree program that requires more than one hundred twenty (120) semester hours for graduation; and

(3) Enroll in classes totaling at least fifteen (15) semester hours of credit during each semester.

(b) The plan of study filed with the student's major department shall specify the semester in which the student shall graduate if the student fulfills the requirements of the plan of study.

SECTION 7. To continue to be eligible for the tuition-freeze program after the student's third year of undergraduate study, a student shall:

(1) Maintain continuous enrollment at the institution in which the student enrolled for the student's third year of undergraduate study;

(2) Enroll each semester in classes totaling at least fifteen (15) semester hours of credit from those specified in the student's plan of study filed with the student's major department; and

(3) Maintain satisfactory progress towards graduation as defined by the Tennessee higher education commission. THEC shall specify the benchmarks the student shall meet to be considered as maintaining satisfactory progress toward graduation.

SECTION 8. A student who successfully maintains eligibility for the tuition-freeze program through the student's second year of undergraduate study may transfer from the institution to another public institution of higher education after the second year of undergraduate study and qualify for the tuition-freeze program at the institution to which the student transfers. The student shall apply to the institution to which the student transfers for the tuition-freeze program at that institution. A student shall not be eligible for a tuition-freeze program, if the student transfers at any time other than after the student's second year of undergraduate study.

SECTION 9. If a student at any time fails to comply with any of the requirements of the tuition-freeze program, then the student shall become ineligible for the tuition-freeze program and shall not be able to regain eligibility.

SECTION 10. THEC is authorized to promulgate rules to effectuate the purposes of this act. Notwithstanding § 4-5-209, any rules promulgated pursuant to this act may be promulgated

as emergency rules in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act, compiled in Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 5.

SECTION 11. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it, and shall apply to students enrolling in public institutions of higher education as entering freshmen in the 2016-2017 academic year and academic years thereafter.